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advance monthly RETAIL SALES

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE • Social and Economic Statistics Administration • BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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The Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, announced today that total sales of retail stores in May were estimated at \$43.0 billion. The Bureau, part of the Department's Social and Economic Statistics Administration (SESA), said this advance figure, after adjustment for seasonal and holiday variations and trading day differences but not for price changes, was \$41.6 billion, more than 1 percent above April and about 12 percent above May sales last year. Adjusted total March-through-May sales averaged about 3 percent above the prior 3 months and 13 percent above the comparable period a year ago.

Based on the full sample, the total U. S. adjusted sales estimate for April was about \$0.3 billion less than the \$41.3 billion published earlier in the April Advance Monthly Retail Sales report released May 10, 1973. The seasonally adjusted sales for April as revised were about 2 percent above March.

The advance sales estimates are based on early reporting, by a small subsample of the Census Bureau's retail survey panel, of sales figures for the weeks and part-weeks comprising the month. Because retailers' weekly records often differ

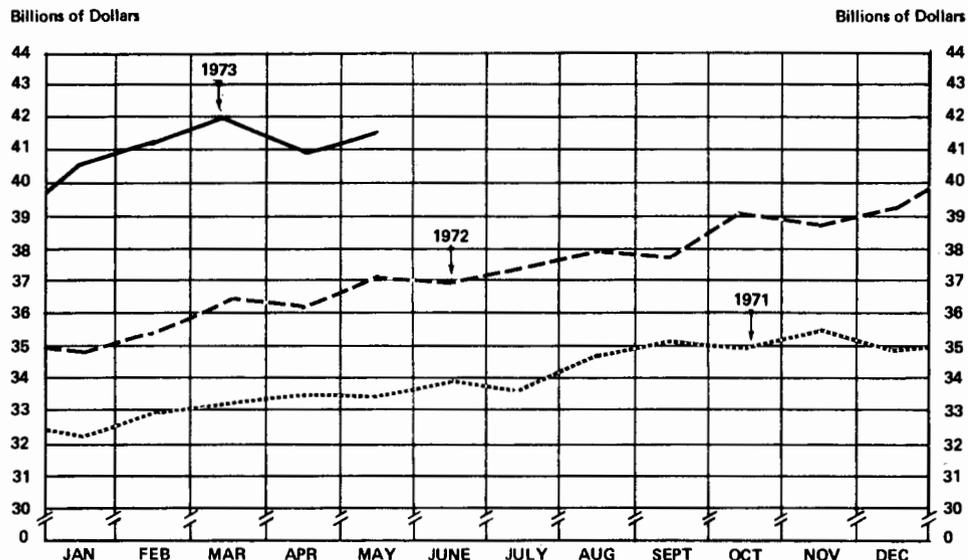
from their monthly records (in reflecting such elements as carrying charges, sales taxes, merchandise returns), the sales figures estimated for the advance report can differ from the subsequently issued report based on the monthly records of the full sample of retailers. Additionally, sampling variability between sub-sample and later full sample results can be a cause of difference. For most months, such differences have been reduced by modifying the advance estimate, prior to publication, on the basis of the relationship between the advance and full-sample data for previous months.

The differences between the month-to-month change in advance and full-sample estimates for total retail sales seldom exceed 1.0 percent and for the past year has averaged 0.8 percent. For individual kind of business groups, differences have been greater, ranging on the average from 0.7 percent for the Food group to 2.8 percent for the Building materials group.

Even for figures derived from the full sample, sales movements from one month to the next can be relatively irregular. Data for 3 months are generally required to indicate the underlying trend.

MONTHLY SALES OF ALL RETAIL STORES IN THE UNITED STATES

(Data ADJUSTED for seasonal, holiday, and trading day differences)



Annual subscription to current retail trade reports are for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. (Weekly Retail Sales Report, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Report, Monthly Retail Trade Report, and Annual Retail Trade Report sold as a single subscription.) Price: \$13.00. Single copies of the Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report are available only from the Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, at 15 cents each.

Table 1. Sales of Retail Stores in the United States, by Kind-of-Business Group

Part A. NOT ADJUSTED for seasonal variations or trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)		
	1973		1972
	May ¹	April ²	May
Total, retail stores ³	43,003	40,485	38,164
Total (excluding automotive group).....	33,346	31,495	30,002
Durable goods stores, total ³	15,687	14,462	13,296
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	27,316	26,023	24,868
Food group.....	8,648	8,099	7,937
Grocery stores.....	8,046	7,521	7,389
Eating and drinking places.....	3,171	2,922	2,894
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	6,700	6,474	6,002
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	6,186	5,987	5,501
Department stores.....	4,188	4,046	3,688
Apparel group.....	1,920	1,992	1,769
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,961	1,831	1,689
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equipment group.....	2,838	2,536	2,385
Automotive group.....	9,657	8,990	8,162
Gasoline service stations.....	2,991	2,832	2,608
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,253	1,199	1,197

Part B. ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences

Kind-of-business group	Sales (millions of dollars)					Percentage change April 1973 from--	
	1973			1972		March 1973	April 1972
	May ¹	April ²	March	May	April		
Total, retail stores ³	41,562	40,978	41,979 ^r	37,141	36,296	-2	+13
Total (excluding automotive group).....	32,854	32,422	33,210 ^r	29,839	29,229	-2	+11
Durable goods stores, total ³	14,495	14,262	14,612 ^r	12,280	11,976	-2	+19
Nondurable goods stores, total ³	27,067	26,716	27,367 ^r	24,861	24,320	-2	+10
Food group.....	8,540	8,431	8,431	7,985	7,795	+1	+10
Eating and drinking places.....	3,031	3,089	3,089	2,785	2,763	-2	+10
General merchandise group with nonstores.....	6,704	7,137	7,137	6,246	6,025	-6	+11
General merchandise group without nonstores (except department stores mail order).....	6,179	6,621	6,621	5,731	5,533	-7	+12
Apparel group.....	1,864	2,175 ^r	2,175 ^r	1,846	1,834	-14	+2
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,997	2,014	2,014	1,748	1,743	-1	+15
Bldg. materials, hardware, farm equipment group.....	2,488	2,614	2,614	2,159	2,079	-5	+20
Automotive group.....	8,556	8,769	8,769	7,302	7,067	-2	+21
Gasoline service stations.....	2,893	2,821	2,821	2,534	2,489	+3	+16
Drug and proprietary stores.....	1,259	1,241	1,241	1,208	1,205	+1	+4

¹ADVANCE sample estimates. ²PRELIMINARY estimates of full sample. ³Totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately. ^rRevised.

Table 2. Percentage Changes for Retail Sales

(ADJUSTED for seasonal variations and trading day differences)

Kind-of-business group	May 1973 from--		March 1973 through May 1973 from--	
	April 1973	May 1972	December 1972 through February 1973	March 1972 through May 1972
Total, retail stores.....	+1	+12	+3	+13
Total (excluding automotive group).....	+1	+10	+3	+11
Durable goods stores, total.....	+2	+18	+3	+19
Nondurable goods stores, total.....	+1	+9	+3	+10

Source: Bureau of the Census